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Surveys, etc*

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

Senior Review Panel

4 September 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR:

[redacted]
Critical Intelligence Problems Committee

STAT

SUBJECT:

Comments on Your Thesis: U.S. Military Strategy
in the Korean War: The Nuclear Dimension,
dated 9 October 1984

[redacted]

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I would challenge only minor points in your paper.

You use the term "First Phase--U.S. Nuclear Bluff."

You are competing with some previous official terminology.
I think the Korean War is divided into the following phases:

1st Phase. North Korea attack and advance to a stalemate at the Pusan perimeter.

2nd Phase. UN counteroffensive from the landing at Inchon to the advance to the Yalu.

3rd Phase. Chinese intervention to their crossing of the Han (January).

4th Phase. UN counterattack to the stalemate on the cease-fire line.

I agree with your thesis that the threat of atomic weapons probably had an influence on the communist decision to end the fighting. I suggest you missed one important point on why our bluff didn't work, i.e., the British traitors Burgess and McLean. These two Soviet agents were privy to the intentions of the US government at the highest levels and promptly shared the information with the Russians. Consequently, our bluff was transparent.

Later, when the Chinese intervened and we in X Corps, as well as much of Eighth Army, were in danger of destruction, capture, or surrender, we did some target planning for possible use of atomic weapons. The ground rule was that a target had to be at least a division or larger in size in an area where a single weapon could destroy it. After only one serious effort to break our covering force at Hamhung, they let us withdraw. Similarly, Eighth Army was allowed to get away and withdraw south of the Han River. Therefore, no decision to use them was required.

Was it the threat of the use of atomic weapons, or were they operating to the limit of their endurance and/or logistics? I don't know, but your thesis could explain what happened.

Later, they could well have had signals that Eisenhower would have the backing of the country if he utilized the bomb, and consequently responded as you indicate.

On the basis of what is known, your thesis stands up. Chou En Lai is dead, Mao is dead, Lin Piao is dead, so we will probably never know for sure.

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